

On the Importance of the Upcoming Moral Revolution



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We live in important times... Was there ever so much to do? Our age is a revolutionary one in the best sense of the word – not of physical but moral revolution. Higher ideas of the social structure, and of human perfection, are being developed. We will not live to see the harvest, but to sow in faith is great happiness. – W. E. Channing

For the worshippers of usefulness there is no morality except the morality of profit, and no religion but the religion of material welfare. They found the body of man crippled and exhausted by poverty, and in their ill-considered zeal they said, “Let us cure this body; and, when it is strong, plump, and well nourished, its soul will return to it.” But I say that that body can only be cured when its soul has been cured. In it lies the root of the disease, and the bodily ailments are but the outward signs of that disease. Humanity today is dying from lack of a common faith, a common idea uniting earth to heaven – the universe to God. From the absence of this religion of spirit, of which but empty forms and lifeless formularies remain, and from a total lack of a sense of duty and a capacity for self-sacrifice, man, like a savage, has fallen prostrate in the dust, and has set up on an empty altar an idol: profit. Despots and the princes of this world have become his high priests, and from them has come the revolting formulary of profit, “Each for his own alone; each for himself alone.” – Mazzini

When he saw the multitude, he was moved with compassion for them, because they were distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd. –

Matthew 9:36

A Revolution is taking place in Russia, and all the world is following it with eager attention, guessing and trying to foresee to what it leads and to what it will bring the Russian people.

To guess at and to foresee this may be interesting and important to outside spectators watching the Russian Revolution, but for us Russians, who are living in this Revolution and making it, the chief interest lies not in guessing what is going to happen, but in defining as clearly and firmly as possible what we must do in these immensely important, terrible, and dangerous times in which we live.

Every revolution is a change of a people's attitude towards government.

Such a change is now taking place in Russia, and we, the whole Russian people, are accomplishing it.

Therefore to know how we can and should change our attitude towards government, we must understand the nature of government: what it consists of, how it arose, and how best to treat it.

Always and among all nations the same thing has occurred. Among people occupied with the necessary work natural to all men, of providing food for themselves and their families, by the chase (hunting animals), or as herdsmen (nomads), or by agriculture, there appeared men of their own or another nation, who forcibly seized the fruit of the workers' toil, first robbing, then enslaving them, and exacting from them either labor or tribute. This used to happen in old times, and still happens in Africa and Asia. And always and everywhere the workers, occupied with their accustomed, unavoidably necessary, and unremitting task (their struggle with nature to feed themselves and rear their children) though by far more numerous and always more moral than their conquerors, submitted to them and fulfilled their demands.

They submitted because it is natural to all men (and especially to those engaged in a serious struggle with nature to support themselves and their families) to dislike strife with other men. Feeling this aversion, they preferred to endure the consequences of the violence put upon them, rather than to give up their necessary, customary, and beloved labor.

There were, certainly, none of those contracts whereby Hugo Grotius and Rousseau explain the relations between the subdued and their subduers. Neither was there, nor could there be, any agreement as to the best way of arranging social life, such as Herbert Spencer imagines in his *Principles of Sociology*. But it happened in the most natural way, that when one set of men did violence to another set, the latter preferred to endure not merely many hardships, but often even great distress, rather than face the cares and efforts necessary to confront their oppressors – more especially as the conquerors took on themselves the duty of protecting the conquered people against internal and external disturbers of the peace. And so the majority of people, busy with work necessary for themselves, just like all animals (that of feeding themselves and their families), not only endured the unavoidable inconveniences, hardships, and even cruelty of their oppressors without fighting, but submitted to them and accepted it as a duty to fulfill all their demands.

When speaking about the formation of primitive communities, this fact is always forgotten: that not only the most numerous and most needed, but also the most moral, members of society were always those who by their labor keep all the rest alive. To such people it is always more natural to submit to violence, and to bear all the hardships it involves, than to give up the necessary work of supporting themselves and their families in order to fight against oppression. It is so now, when we see the people of Burma, the Fellahs of Egypt, and the Boers surrendering to the English, and the Bedouins to the French. And in olden times it was even more so.

Lately, in the curious and widely diffused teaching called the Science of Sociology, it has been asserted that the relations between the members of human society have been, and are, dependent on economic conditions. But to assert this is merely to substitute for the clear and evident cause of a phenomenon one of its effects. The cause of this or that economic condition always was (and could not but be) the oppression of some men by others. Economic conditions are a result of violence, and cannot therefore be the cause of human relations.

Evil men – the Cains – who loved idleness and were covetous, always attacked good men – the Abels – the tillers of the soil, and by killing them or threatening to kill them, profited by their toil. The good, gentle, and industrious people, instead of fighting their oppressors, considered it best to submit, partly because they did not wish to fight, and partly because they could not do so without interrupting their work of feeding themselves and their neighbors. On this oppression of the good by the evil, and not on any economic conditions, all existing human societies have been, and still are, based and built.

From the most ancient times, and among all the nations of the earth, the relations of the rulers to the ruled have been based on violence. But this relation, like everything else in the world, was and is continually changing. It changes from two causes. First, because the more secure their power becomes and the longer it lasts, the more do those in power (the leisured classes who have power) grow depraved, unreasonable and cruel, and the more injurious to their subjects do their demands become. Secondly, because as those in power grow more depraved, their subjects see more and more clearly the harm and folly of submitting to such depraved power.

People in power get constantly corrupt. Because, firstly, such immoral people, preferring idleness and violence to work, having grasped power and used it to satisfy their lusts and passions, give themselves up more and more to these passions and vices. Secondly, lusts and vices, which in the case of ordinary men cannot be gratified without meeting with obstacles, in the case of those who rule not only do not meet such obstacles and do not cause any disapproval, but on the contrary are applauded by all who surround them. The latter generally benefit by the madness of their masters. And besides, it pleases them to imagine that the virtues and wisdom to which alone it is natural for reasonable men to submit are to be found in the men to whom they submit. Therefore, the vices of those in power are lauded as if they were virtues, and grow to terrible proportions.

Consequently, the folly and vice of the crowned and uncrowned rulers of the nations have reached such appalling dimensions as were reached by the Neros, Charleses, Henrys, Louis, Johns, Peters, Catherines, and Marats.

Nor is this all. The rulers would not do so much harm if they were satisfied with their personal debauchery and vices; but idle, satiated, and depraved men, such as rulers were and are, must have something to live for. They must have some aims and try to attain them. And such men can have no aim except to get more and more fame. All other passions soon reach the limits of satiety. Only ambition has no limits, and therefore almost all potentates strive

after fame, especially military fame, the only kind attainable by depraved men unacquainted with, and incapable of, real work. For the wars devised by the potentates, money, armies and, above all, the slaughter of men, are necessary; and in consequence of this the condition of the ruled becomes harder and harder, and at last the oppression reaches a point at which the ruled can no longer continue to submit to the ruling power, but must try to alter their relation toward it.

Such is one reason for the change in the relations between the rulers and the ruled. Another still more important reason for this change is that the ruled, while recognizing the rights of the authorities above them and accustomed to submit to it, with the growth of education and realization of moral consciousness, begin to see and feel not only the ever increasing material harm of the government, but also that to submit to such power is becoming immoral.

It was possible five hundred or a thousand years ago for people, in obedience to their rulers, to slaughter whole nations for the sake of conquest, or, for dynastic, religious, or fanatic aims, to behead, torture, quarter, imprison, destroy, and enslave whole nations. But in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, subjugated people, enlightened by Christianity or by the humanitarian teachings which have grown up out of it, can no longer submit without pangs of conscience to the powers which demand that they should participate in the slaughter of men defending their freedom (as was done in the Chinese, Boer, and Philippine wars). They can no longer with quiet consciences, as formerly, know themselves to be participants in the deeds of violence and the executions which are being committed by the governments of their countries.

Thus, force-using power destroys itself from both ends. It destroys itself through the ever- growing depravity of those in authority and the consequent continually increasing burden carried by the ruled, and by its ever-increasing deviation from the ever developing moral perception of the ruled. Therefore, where force-using power exists, a moment must inevitably come when the relation of the people towards that power must change. This moment may come sooner or later, depending on the degree and the rapidity of the corruption of the rulers, on the amount of their cunning, on the quieter or more restless temperament of the people, and even on their geographic position facilitating or hindering the interaction of the people among themselves. But sooner or later that moment must inevitably come to all nations.

To the Western nations, which arose on the ruins of the Roman Empire, that moment came long ago. The struggle of people against government began even in Rome. It continued in all the states that succeeded Rome, and still goes on. To the Eastern nations of Turkey, Persia, India, and China, that moment has not yet arrived. For the Russian people, it has now come.

The Russian people are today confronted by the dreadful choice of either, like the Eastern nations, continuing to submit to their unreasonable and depraved governments in spite of all the misery they have inflicted upon them; or, as all the Western nations have done, realizing the evil of the existing governments, upsetting it by force and establishing a new one. Such a choice seems quite natural to the non-laboring classes of Russia, who are in touch with the upper and prosperous classes of the Western nations and consider the military might, the industrial, commercial and technical improvements, and that external glitter to which the Western nations have attained under their altered governments to be a great good.

Most of the Russian non-laboring classes are quite convinced that the Russian people can do nothing better in this crisis than follow the path the Western nations have trodden and are still treading: to fight the power, limit it, and place it more and more in the hands of the whole people.

Is this opinion right, and is such action good? Have the Western nations, travelling for centuries along that path, attained what they strove for? Have they freed themselves from the evils they wished to be rid of?

The Western nations, like all others, began by submitting to the power that demanded their submission, choosing to submit rather than to fight. But that power, in the persons of the Charleses (the Great and the Fifth), the Philips, the Louis, and the Henry the Eighths, becoming more and more depraved, reached such a condition that the Western nations could no longer endure it. The Western nations, at different times, revolted against their rulers and fought them.

This struggle took place in different forms, at different periods, but always found expression in the same ways – in civil wars, robberies, murders, and executions – and finished with the fall of the old power and the accession of a new one. And when the new power became as oppressive to the people as that which had been overthrown, it too was upset, and another new one was put in its place, which by the same unalterable nature of power became in due course as harmful as its predecessors. Thus, for instance, in France there were eleven changes of power within eighty years: the Bourbons, the Convention, the Directory, Bonaparte, the Empire, again the Bourbons, a Republic, Louis Philippe, again a Republic, again a Bonaparte, and again a Republic. The substitution of new powers for old ones took place among other nations too, though not so rapidly as in France. These changes in most cases did not improve the condition of the people, and therefore those who made these changes could not help coming to the conclusion that the misery they suffered did not so much depend on the nature of the persons in power as on the fact that a few persons exercised power over many. The people therefore

tried to render the power harmless by limiting it, and such limitation was introduced in several countries in the form of elected chambers of representatives.

But the people who limited the arbitrariness of the rulers and found the assemblies, becoming themselves possessors of power, naturally succumbed to the depraving influence that accompanies power, and to which the autocratic rulers had succumbed. These men, becoming sharers in power even though not singly, perpetrated, jointly or separately, the same kind of evil, and became as great a burden on the people as the autocratic rulers had been. Then, to limit the arbitrariness of power still more, monarchical power was abolished altogether in some countries, and a government was established chosen by the whole people. In this way republics were instituted in France, America and Switzerland. The referendum and the initiative were introduced, giving every member of the community the possibility of interfering and participating in legislation.

But the only effect of all these measures was that the citizens of these states, participating more and more in power, and being more and more diverted from serious occupations, grew more and more depraved. The calamities from which the people suffer remain, however, exactly the same under constitutional, monarchical, or republican governments, with or without referendums.

Nor could it be otherwise, for the idea of limiting power by the participation in power of all who are subject to it is unsound at its very core, and self-contradictory. If one man rules over all with the aid of his helpers, it is unjust, and in all likelihood such rule will be harmful to the people. The same will be the case when the minority rules over the majority. But the power of the majority over the minority also fails to secure a just management, for we have no reason to believe that the majority participating in government is wiser than the minority that avoids participation.

To extend the participation in government to all, as might be done by still greater extension of the referendum and the initiative, would only mean that everybody would be fighting everybody else. That man should have a power

over his fellows that is founded on violence is evil at its source, and no kind of arrangement that maintains the right of man to do violence to man can prevent evil from being evil.

Therefore, among all nations, however they are ruled, whether by the most despotic or most democratic governments, the chief and fundamental calamities from which the people suffer, remain the same: the same ever-increasing, enormous budgets; the same animosity towards their neighbors, necessitating military preparations and armies; the same taxes; the same state and private monopolies; the same depriving the people of the right to use the land, which is given to private owners; the same enslaving of subject races; the same constant threats of war and the same wars, destroying the lives of men and undermining their morality.

It is true that the representative governments of Western Europe and America – constitutional monarchies as well as republics – have uprooted some of the external abuses practiced by the representatives of power, and have made it impossible that the holders of power should be such monsters as were the different Louis, Charleses, Henrys, and Johns. (Although in representative government not only is it possible that power will be seized by cunning, immoral, and artful mediocrities, such as various prime ministers and presidents have been, but the construction of those governments is such that only that kind of people can obtain power.) It is true that representative governments have abolished such abuses as the *lettres de cachet*, have removed restrictions on the press, have stopped religious persecutions and oppressions, have submitted the taxation of the people to discussion by their representatives, have made the actions of the government public and subject to criticism, and have facilitated the rapid development in those countries of all sorts of technical improvements giving great comfort to the lives of rich citizens and great military power to the state. Thus, the nations that have representative government have doubtless become more powerful industrially, commercially, and in military matters than despotically governed nations, and the lives of their leisured classes have certainly become wealthier, more comfortable, pleasant, and attractive than they used to be. But is the life of the majority of the people in those countries more secure, freer, or, above all, more reasonable and moral? I think not.

Under the despotic power of one man, the number of persons who come under the corrupting influence of power and live on the labor of others is limited, and consists of the despot's close friends, assistants, servants, and flatterers, and of their helpers. The infection of depravity is focused in the court of the despot, whence it radiates in all directions.

Where power is limited, i.e. where many persons take part in it, the number of centers of infection is augmented, for everyone who shares power has his friends, helpers, servants, flatterers, and relations. Where there is universal right to vote, these centers of infection are still more diffused. Every voter

becomes the object of flattery and bribery. The character of the power itself is also changed. Instead of power founded on direct violence, we get a monetary power, also founded on violence, not directly, but through a complicated transmission.

Thus, under representative governments, instead of one or a few centers of depravity, we get a large number of such centers. There springs up a large class of people living idly on others' labor, the class called the "bourgeois" – people who, being protected by violence, arrange for themselves easy and comfortable lives, free from hard work.

When arranging an easy and pleasant life, not only for a monarch and his court, but also for thousands of little kinglets, many things are needed to embellish and to amuse this idle life. It results that inventions appear whenever power passes from a despotic to a representative government, which facilitate the supply of objects that add to the pleasure and safety of the lives of the wealthy classes.

To produce all these objects, an ever-increasing number of workingmen are drawn away from agriculture, and have their capacities directed to the production of pleasing trifles used by the rich, or even to some extent by the workers themselves. There springs up a class of town workers so situated as to be in complete dependence on the wealthy classes. The number of these people grows and grows the longer the power of representative government endures, and their condition becomes worse and worse. In the United States, out of a population of seventy million, ten million are proletarians, and the relation between the well-to-do and the proletariat classes is the same in England, Belgium and France. The number of men exchanging the labor of producing objects of primary necessity for the labor of producing objects of luxury is ever increasing in those countries. It clearly follows that the result of such a trend of affairs must be the ever greater overburdening of that diminishing number which has to support the luxurious lives of the ever increasing number of idle people. Evidently, such a way of life cannot continue.

What is happening is as though there were a man whose body went on

increasing in weight while the legs that supported it grew continually thinner and weaker. When the support eventually vanished, the body would have to fall.

The Western nations, like all others, submitted to the power of their conquerors only to avoid the worry and sin of fighting. But when that power bore too heavily upon them, they began to fight it, though still continuing to submit to power, which they regarded as a necessity. At first only a small part of the nation shared in the fight. Then, when the struggle of that small part proved ineffectual, an ever greater and greater number entered into the conflict, and it ended by most of the people of those nations, instead of freeing themselves from the worry and sin of fighting, sharing in the wielding of power, which was the very thing they wished to avoid when they first submitted to power. The inevitable result of this was the increase of the depraving influence that comes with power, an increase not affecting a small number of persons only, as had been the case under a single ruler, but affecting all the members of the community. And steps are now being taken to subject women to it also.

Representative government and universal suffrage resulted in every partaker of a fraction of power being exposed to all the evil that comes with power: bribery, flattery, vanity, self-conceit, idleness and, above all, immoral participation in deeds of violence. Every member of parliament is exposed to all these temptations in a yet greater degree. Every representative always begins his career of power by befooling people, making promises he knows he will not keep, and when sitting in his governmental body he takes part in making laws that are enforced by violence. It is the same with all senators and presidents. There is a price for the seat in senate, and there are dealers who make these deals with the candidates. Similar corruption prevails in the election of a president. In the United States the election of a president costs millions to those financiers who know that, when elected, he will maintain on various articles certain monopolies or import duties, which are advantageous to them and which will enable them to recoup the cost of the election a hundredfold.

And this corruption, with all its accompanying phenomena – the desire to avoid hard work and to benefit by comforts and pleasures provided by others;

interests and cares, inaccessible to a man engaged in work, concerning the general business of the state; the spread of a lying and inflammatory press; and, above all, animosity between nations, classes, and men – has grown and grown. It has reached such dimensions that the struggle of all men against their fellows has become so habitual a state of things that science (the science that is engaged in justification of all the nastiness done by men) has decided that the struggle and enmity of all against all is a necessary, unavoidable, and beneficent condition of human life.

That peace, which seemed the greatest of blessings to the ancients who saluted each other with the words “Peace be unto you!” has now quite disappeared from among the Western peoples. Not only has it disappeared, but men try to assure themselves by the aid of science that man’s highest destiny lies not in peace, but in the strife of all against all. And really, among the Western nations, an unceasing industrial, commercial and military strife is continually waged – a strife of state against state, class against class, labor against capital, party against party, and man against man.

Nor is this all. The chief result of this participation of all men in power is that men, being more and more drawn away from direct work on the land, and more and more involved in diverse ways of exploiting the labor of others, have lost their independence and are forced to lead immoral lives by the position they live in. Having neither the desire nor the habit of living by tilling their own land, the Western nations had to obtain their means of subsistence from other countries. They could do this only in two ways: by fraud, that is, by exchanging things for the most part unnecessary or depraving, such as alcohol, opium, or weapons, for the foodstuffs indispensable to them; or by violence, that is, by robbing the people of Asia and Africa wherever they saw an opportunity of doing this with impunity.

Such is the position of Germany, Austria, Italy, France, the United States, and especially Great Britain, which is held up as an example for the imitation and envy of other nations. Almost all the people of these nations, having become conscious participators in deeds of violence, devote their strength and attention to the activities of government, industry, and commerce, which aim chiefly at satisfying the demands of the rich for luxuries. They subjugate

(partly by direct force, partly by money) the agricultural people both of their own and of foreign countries, who have to provide them with the necessities of life.

Such people form a majority in some nations. In others they are as yet only a minority, but the percentage of men living on the labor of others grows uncontrollably and very rapidly, to the detriment of those who still do reasonable, agricultural work. Thus, most of the people of Western Europe are already in the condition of not being able to subsist by their own labor on their own land. (The United States is not so yet, but is being irresistibly drawn towards it.) They have to take the necessities of life from other people, who still do their own labor. And they get these necessities either by corrupting foreign nations or by gross violence.

From this it necessarily results that trade, aiming chiefly at satisfying the demands of the rich, and of the richest of the rich (that is, the government), directs its chief powers not to improving the conditions of agricultural work, but to making it possible to process large tracts of land (of which the people have been deprived) by the aid of machines, manufacturing finery for women, building luxurious palaces, and producing candies, toys, motor-cars, tobacco, wines, delicacies, medicines, enormous quantities of printing paper, guns, rifles, powder, unnecessary railways, and so forth.

As there is no end to the caprices of men when they are met not by their own labor but by that of others, industry is more and more diverted to the production of the most unnecessary, stupid, depraving products, and draws people more and more from reasonable work. And no end can be foreseen to these inventions and preparations for the amusement of idle people, especially as the stupider and more depraving an invention is – such as the use of motors in place of animals or of one's own legs, railways to go up mountains, or armored automobiles armed with quick-firing guns – the more pleased and proud of them are both their inventors and the owners.

The longer representative government lasted and the more it extended, the more did the Western nations abandon agriculture and devote their mental and physical powers to manufacturing and trading in order to supply luxuries to the wealthy classes, to enable the nations to fight one another, and to deprave the undepraved. Thus, in England, which has had representative government longest, less than one-seventh of the adult male population is now employed in agriculture, one-half of the population in Germany and France, and a similar number in other states. At the present time the position of these states is such that, even if they could free themselves from the calamity of proletarianism, they could not support themselves independently of other countries. All these nations are unable to subsist by their own toil. And, just as the proletariat is dependent on the well-to-do classes, it is also completely dependent on countries that support it and are able to sell it their surplus, such as India, Russia, or Australia.

England supports from its own land less than a fifth of its population, and Germany less than half, as is the case with France and other countries. The condition of these nations becomes year-by-year more dependent on the food supplied from abroad.

In order to exist, these nations must have resort to the deceptions and violence called in their language “acquiring markets” and “colonial policy.” They act accordingly, striving to throw their nets of enslavement farther and farther to all ends of the earth, to catch those who are still leading rational lives. Competing with one another, they increase their armaments more and more, and more and more cunningly, under various pretexts, seize the land of those who still live rational lives, and force these people to feed them.

They have been able to do this until now. But the limit to the acquirement of markets, to the deception of buyers, to the sale of unnecessary and injurious articles, and to the enslavement of distant nations, is already apparent. The peoples of distant lands are themselves becoming depraved, are learning to make for themselves all those articles which the Western nations supplied

them with, and are, above all, learning the not very cunning science of arming themselves, and of being as cruel as their teachers.

Thus, the end of such immoral existence is already in sight. The people of the Western nations see this coming, and feeling unable to stop in their career, comfort themselves (as people half aware that they are ruining their lives always do) by self-deception and blind faith. Such blind faith is spreading more and more widely among most of Western nations. This faith is a belief that those inventions and improvements for increasing the comforts of the wealthy classes and for fighting (that is, slaughtering men), which the enslaved masses have been forced to produce for several generations, are something very important and almost holy, called, in the language of those who uphold such a mode of life, “culture,” or even more grandly, “civilization.”

Just as every creed has a science of its own, so this faith in “civilization” has a science: sociology, the one aim of which is to justify the false and desperate position in which the people of the Western world now find themselves. The object of this science is to prove that all these inventions – ironclads, telegraphs, nitroglycerine bombs, photographs, electric railways, and all sorts of similar foolish and nasty inventions that stupefy the people and are designed to increase the comforts of the idle classes and to protect them by force – not only represent something good, but even something sacred, predetermined by supreme unalterable laws. Therefore, they consider that the depravity they call “civilization” is a necessary condition of human life, and must inevitably be adopted by all mankind.

This faith is just as blind as any other faith, just as unshakable, and just as self-assured. Any other position may be disputed and argued about, but “civilization” – meaning those inventions and those forms of life among which we are living, and all the follies and nastiness that we produce – is an indubitable blessing, beyond all discussion. Everything that disturbs faith in civilization is a lie, and everything that supports this faith is a sacred truth.

This faith and its attendant science cause the Western nations not to wish to see or to acknowledge that the ruinous path they are following leads to

inevitable destruction. The so-called “most advanced” among them cheer themselves with the thought that they can reach, not destruction, but the highest bliss without abandoning this path. They assure themselves that, by again employing violence such as brought them to their present ruinous condition, somehow or other, from among people now hunting after the greatest material, animal, welfare for themselves, men (influenced by Socialist doctrines) will suddenly appear. These men will employ power without being depraved by it, and will establish an order of things in which people accustomed to a greedy, selfish struggle for their own profit will suddenly grow self-sacrificing, work together for the common good, and share alike.

But this creed, having no reasonable foundation, has lately more and more lost credibility among thinking people. It is now held only by the laboring masses, whose eyes it diverts from the miseries of the present, giving them some a sort of hope in a blissful future.

Such is the common faith of most of the Western nations, drawing them towards destruction.

And this tendency is so strong that the voices of the wise among them, such as Rousseau, Lamennais, Carlyle, Ruskin, Channing, Garrison, Emerson, Herzen, and Edward Carpenter leave no trace in the consciousness of those who, though rushing towards destruction, do not wish to see or admit it.

And it is to travel this path of destruction that the Russian people are now invited by European politicians, who are delighted that one more nation should join them in their desperate plight. Frivolous Russians urge us to follow this path, considering it much easier and simpler, instead of thinking with their own heads, slavishly to imitate what the Western nations did centuries ago, before they knew whither it would lead.

Submission to violent power brought both the Eastern nations (who continue to submit to their depraved oppressors) and the Western nations (who have spread power and its accompanying depravity among the masses of the people) not only to great misfortunes, but also to an unavoidable collision between the East and the West. This now threatens them both with still greater calamities.

The Western nations, besides their distress at home and the corruption of the greater part of their population by participation in power, have been led to the necessity of seizing the fruits of the labor of the Eastern nations by force or fraud for their own consumption. They accomplish this by certain methods they have devised called “civilization,” and they succeeded in doing this until the Eastern nations learned the same methods. The Eastern nations, or most of them, still continue to obey their rulers and, lagging behind the Western nations in devising things needed for war, are forced to submit to them.

But some of them are already beginning to acquire the depravity or “civilization” that the Europeans are teaching them. The Japanese have shown that they can easily assimilate all the shallow, cunning methods of an immoral and cruel civilization, and are preparing to withstand their oppressors by the same means that are employed against them.

And now the Russian nation, standing between the two – having partially acquired Western methods, yet until now continuing to submit to its government – is placed, by fate itself, in a position in which it must stop and think. It sees on one side the miseries to which, like the Eastern nations, it has been brought by submission to despotic power. On the other hand, it sees that among the Western nations the limitation of power, and its diffusion among the people, has not remedied the miseries of the people, but has only depraved them and put them in a position in which they have to live by deceiving and robbing other nations. Thus, the Russian people must naturally alter its attitude towards power, but not as the Western nations have done. The Russian nation now stands, like the hero of the fairy-tale, at the parting

of two roads, both leading to destruction.

It is impossible for the Russian nation to continue to submit to its government. It is impossible, because having freed itself from the prestige which has hitherto enveloped the Russian government, and having once understood that most of the miseries suffered by the people are caused by the government, the Russian people cannot cease to be aware of the cause of the calamities they suffer, or cease to desire to free themselves from it.

Besides, the Russian people cannot continue to submit to the government, because now a true government – a Government that gives security and tranquility to a nation – no longer exists in reality. There are two envenomed and contending parties, but no government to which it is possible to quietly submit.

For Russians now to continue to submit to their government would mean to continue not only to bear the ever-increasing calamities that they have suffered and are suffering – lack of land, famine, heavy taxes, and cruel, useless, and devastating wars – but also and chiefly it would mean taking part in the crimes this government is now perpetrating at self-defence, clearly in vain.

Still less reasonable would it be for the Russian people to enter on the path of the Western nations, since the deadliness of that path is already plainly demonstrated. It would be evidently irrational for the Russian nation to do this, for though it was possible for the Western nations to choose a path now seen to be false before they knew where it would lead them, the Russian people cannot help seeing and knowing its danger.

Moreover, when they entered on that path, most of the Western people were already living by trade, exchange, and commerce, or by direct (negro) or indirect slave-owning (as is now the case in Europe's colonies), while the Russian nation is chiefly agricultural. For the Russian people to enter on the path along which the Westerners went would mean consciously to commit the same acts of violence that the government demands of it, only not for the Government, but against it: to rob, burn, blow up, murder, and carry on civil

war; and to commit all these crimes knowing that it does so no longer in obedience to another's will, but at its own. They would at last attain only what has been attained by the Western nations after centuries of struggle, and they would go on suffering the same chief ills that they now suffer from: lack of land, heavy and ever-increasing taxes, national debts, growing armaments, and cruel, useless wars. More than that, they would be deprived, like the Western nations, of their chief blessing – their accustomed, beloved, agricultural life – and would drift into hopeless dependence on foreign labor. And Russia would do this under the most disadvantageous conditions, carrying on an industrial and commercial struggle with the Western nations with the certainty of being vanquished.

Destruction awaits them on this path and on that.

What, then, is the Russian nation to do? The natural and simple answer, the direct outcome of the facts of the case, is to follow neither this path nor that – neither to submit neither to the Government, which has brought it to its present wretched state, nor, imitating the West, to set up a representative, force-using government such as those which have led those nations to a still worse condition. This simplest and most natural answer is peculiarly suited to the Russian people at all times, and especially at the present crisis.

Indeed, it is a thing of wonder that peasant, farm worker, of Túla, Sarátov, Vólogda, or Khárkof Province should until now have submitted to and even aided their own enslavement.

They pay taxes, without knowing or asking how they would be spent, and give their sons to be soldiers, knowing still less for what the sufferings and deaths of these so painfully reared, and to them so necessary workers, were wanted. It is without any profit to themselves and contrary to the demands of their own consciences that they suffer all sorts of misery as a result of their submission to government.

It would be just as strange, or even stranger, if such agricultural peasants were to replace the old force-using power by a new force-using power by employing violence similar to that from which they suffer, instead of simply ceasing to submit to it. These peasants live their peaceful, independent life without any need of a government, and wish to be rid of the burdens they endure at the hands of a violent and to them unnecessary power. But this is what the French and English peasants did in their time.

Why! The Russian agricultural population need only cease to obey any kind of force-using government and refuse to participate in it, and immediately taxes, military service, all official oppression, private property in land, and the misery of the working classes that results from it would cease of themselves. All these misfortunes would cease, because there would be no one to inflict them.

The historic, economic, and religious conditions of the Russian nation place it in exceptionally favorable circumstances for acting in this manner.

In the first place, it has reached the point at which a change of its old relations towards the existing power has become inevitable after the wrongfulness of the path travelled by the Western nations, with whom it has long been in closest connection, has become fully apparent. Power in the West has completed its circle. The Western peoples, like all others, accepted a force-using power at first in order themselves to escape from the struggles, cares, and sins of power. When that power became corrupt and burdensome, they tried to lighten its weight by limiting it – that is, by participating in it. This participation, spreading out more and more widely, caused more and more people to share in power. Finally, most of the people, who at first submitted to power to avoid strife and to escape from participation in power, have had to take part both in strife and in power, and have suffered the inevitable accompaniment of power: corruption.

It has become quite clear that the pretended limitation of power only means changing those in power, increasing their number, and thereby increasing the amount of depravity, irritation, and anger among men. The power remains as it was: the power of a minority of the worst men over a majority of the better. It has also become plain that an increase in number of those in power has drawn people from labor on the land, which is natural to all men, to factory labor for the production (and over-production) of unnecessary and harmful things, and has obliged most of Western nations to base their lives on the deception and enslavement of other nations.

The fact that, in our days, all this has become quite obvious in the lives of the Western nations is the first condition favorable to the Russian people, who have now reached the moment when they must change their relation towards power. For the Russian people to follow the path the Western nations have trodden would be as though a traveler followed a path on which those who went before him had lost their way, and from which the most far-sighted of them were already returning.

Secondly, while all the Western nations have more or less abandoned

agriculture and are living chiefly by manufacture and commerce, the Russian people have arrived at the necessity of changing their relation towards power while the immense majority of them are still living an agricultural life, which they love and prize so much that most Russians when torn from it, are always ready to return to it at the first opportunity.

This condition is of special value for Russians when freeing themselves from the evils of power, for men have the least need of government while leading an agricultural life. Or rather, an agricultural life, less than any other, gives a government opportunities of interfering with the life of the people. I know some village communes that emigrated to the Far East and settled in places where the frontier between China and Russia was not clearly defined, and lived there in prosperity, disregarding all governments, until they were discovered by Russian officials.

Townsmen generally regard agriculture as one of the lowest occupations to which man can devote himself. Yet the enormous majority of the population of the whole world is engaged in agriculture, and on it the possibility of existence for all the rest of the human race depends. In reality, the human race is made up of agrarians. All the rest – ministers, locksmiths, professors, carpenters, artists, tailors, scientists, physicians, generals, and soldiers – are but the servants or parasites of the agrarians. Thus agriculture, besides being the most moral, healthy, joyful, and necessary occupation, is also the highest of human activities and alone gives men true independence.

Most Russians are still living this most natural, moral, and independent agricultural life. This is the second, most important, circumstance, which makes it possible and natural for the Russian people, now that they are faced by the necessity of changing their relations towards power, to change them in no other way than by freeing themselves from the evil of all power, and simply ceasing to submit to any kind of government.

These are the first two conditions, both of which are external.

The third condition, an inner one, is the religiousness that, according to the evidence of history, the observation of foreigners who have studied the

Russian people, and especially the inner consciousness of every Russian, was and is a special characteristic of the Russian people.

In Western Europe, there is no doubt that the essence of Christianity, not only among Roman Catholics but also among Lutherans, and even more in the Anglican Church, has long ceased to be a faith directing people's lives, and has been replaced by external forms, or among the higher classes by indifference and the rejection of all religion. This is because the Gospels printed in Latin were inaccessible to the people until the time of the Reformation, and have remained until now inaccessible to the whole Roman Catholic world, or because of the refined methods which the Papacy employs to hide true Christianity from the people, or in consequence of the particularly practical type of character of those nations. For the vast majority of Russians, however, Christian teaching in its application to life has never ceased to be, and still continues to be, the chief guide of life. This is perhaps because the Gospels became accessible to them as early as the tenth century, or because of the coarse stupidity of the Russo-Greek Church, which tried clumsily and therefore vainly to hide the true meaning of the Christian teaching, or because of some peculiar trait in the Russian character, or because of their agricultural life.

From the earliest times until now, the Christian understanding of life has manifested, and still manifests, itself among the Russian people in most various traits, peculiar to them alone. It shows itself in their acknowledgment of the brotherhood and equality of all men, of whatever race or nationality; in their complete religious toleration; in their not condemning criminals, but regarding them as unfortunate; in the custom of begging one another's forgiveness on certain days; in the habitual use of a form of the word "forgive" when taking leave of anybody; in the habit not merely of charity towards, but even of respect for beggars, which is common among the people; and in the perfect readiness (sometimes coarsely shown) for self-sacrifice for that what they consider to be religious truth, which was shown and still is shown by those who burn themselves to death, or castrate themselves, and even (as in a recent case) by those who bury themselves alive.

The same Christian outlook always appeared in the relation of the Russian people towards those in power. The people always preferred to submit to power, rather than to participate in it. They considered, and still consider, the position of rulers to be sinful and not at all desirable. This Christian attitude of the Russian people towards life generally, and especially towards those in power, is the third and most important condition which makes it most simple and natural for them at the present juncture to go on living their customary, agricultural, Christian life, without taking any part either in the old power, or in the struggle between the old and the new.

Such are the three conditions, different from those of the Western nations, in which the Russian people find themselves placed at the present important time. These conditions, it would seem, ought to induce them to choose the simplest way out of the difficulty by not accepting and not submitting to any kind of force-using power. Yet the Russian people, at this difficult and important crisis, do not choose the natural way, but, wavering between governmental and revolutionary violence, begin (in the persons of their worst representatives) to take part in the violence, and seem to be preparing to follow the road to destruction along which the Western nations have travelled. Why is this so?

What has caused, and still causes, this surprising phenomenon that people suffering from the abuse of power, which they themselves tolerate and support, do not do that what sets them free, in the most simple and easy way, from all the disasters brought about by power – that is to say, do not simply cease obeying it? And not only do they not act thus, but they go on doing the very things that deprive them of physical and mental well-being. They either continue to obey the existing power, or establish another similar force-using power and obey that.

Why is this so? People feel that their unfortunate position is the result of violence, and are dimly aware that they need freedom to get rid of their misery. But, strange to say, to get rid of violence and gain freedom, they seek, invent, and use all sorts of measures: mutiny, change of rulers, alterations of government, all kinds of constitutions, new arrangements between different states, colonial policies, trade unions, trusts, and social organizations. They employ everything but the one thing that would most simply, easily, and surely free them from all their distresses: the refusal to submit to power.

One might think that it must be quite clear to people, not deprived of reason, that violence breeds violence, and that the only means of liberation from violence lies in not taking part in it.

This approach, one would think, is quite obvious. It is evident that a great majority of men can be enslaved by a small minority only if the enslaved themselves take part in their own enslavement.

If people are enslaved, it is only because they either fight violence with violence or participate in violence for their own personal profit. Those who neither struggle against violence nor take part in it can no more be enslaved than water can be cut. They can be robbed, prevented from moving about, wounded, or killed, but they cannot be enslaved – that is, made to act against their own reasonable will.

This is true both of individuals and of nations. If the 200,000,000 Hindus did not submit to the power which demands their participation in deeds of violence, always associated with killings: if they did not enlist, paid no taxes to be used for violence, were not tempted by rewards offered by the conquerors (rewards originally taken from themselves), and did not submit to the English laws introduced among them, then neither 50,000 Englishmen, nor all the English in the world, could enslave India, even if instead of 200,000,000 there were but 1,000 Hindus. So it is in the cases of Poles, Czechs, Irish, Bedouins, and all the conquered races.

And it is the same in the case of the workmen enslaved by the capitalists. Not all the capitalists in the world could enslave the workers if the workmen themselves did not help, and did not take part in their own enslavement.

All this is so evident that it is a shame to mention it. And yet people, who discuss all other conditions of life reasonably, not only do not see and do not act as reason dictates in this matter, but act quite contrary to reason and to their own advantage. Each one says, "I can't be the first to do what nobody else does. Let others begin, and then I too will cease to submit to power." And so says a second, a third, and everybody. All, under the pretence that no one can begin, instead of acting in a manner unquestionably advantageous to all, continue to do what is disadvantageous to everybody, and is also irrational and contrary to human nature. No one likes to cease submitting to power, lest he should be persecuted by power. Yet he well knows that obeying power means being subject to all sorts of the gravest calamities in foreign or civil wars.

What is the cause of this?

The cause of it is that people do not reason when yielding to power, but act under the influence of something that has always been one of the most widespread motives of human action, and has lately been most carefully studied and explained. It is called "suggestion" or hypnotism. This hypnosis prevents people from acting in accordance with their reasonable nature and their own interest, and forces them to do what is unreasonable and disadvantageous. It causes them to believe that the violence perpetrated by

people calling themselves “the government” is not simply the immoral conduct of immoral men, but is the action of some mysterious, sacred being, called the state, without which men have never existed (which is quite untrue) and can never exist.

But how can reasonable beings, men, submit to such a surprising suggestion, contrary to reason, feeling, and to their own interest?

The answer to this question is that not only do children, the mentally diseased, and idiots succumb to hypnotic influence and suggestion, but all persons, to the extent to which their religious consciousness is weakened – that is the consciousness of their relation to the supreme cause on which their existence depends. Most of the people of our times more and more lack this consciousness.

The reason why most people of our time lack this consciousness is that, having once committed the sin of submitting to human power, and not acknowledging this sin to be a sin, but trying to hide it from themselves or to justify it, they have exalted the authorities to which they have submitted, and came to the point that it has replaced God’s law for them. When human law has replaced divine law, men have lost religious consciousness and fallen under governmental hypnotism, which suggests to them the illusion that those who enslave them are not simply delusional, wicked people, but are representatives of that mystic being, the State, without which it is supposed that men are unable to exist.

The vicious circle has been completed. Submission to government has weakened and partly destroyed the religious consciousness in people, and the weakening and cessation of religious consciousness has subjected them to human power.

The sin of submission to power began with the oppressors saying to the oppressed, “Do what we demand of you. If you disobey, we will kill you. But if you submit to us, we will establish order and will protect you from other oppressors.”

And the oppressed, in order to live their accustomed lives, and not to have to

fight these and other oppressors, seem to have answered, “Alright, we will submit to you. Establish whatever laws you choose, and we will obey them. As long as we can live peacefully, supporting ourselves and our families.”

The oppressors did not recognize their sin, being carried away by the attractions and advantages of power. The oppressed thought it no sin to submit to the oppressors, for it seemed better to submit than to fight. But there was sin in this submission, and as great a sin as that of those who used violence. Had the oppressed endured all the hardships, taxations, and cruelties without acknowledging the authority of the oppressors to be lawful, and without promising to obey it, they would not have sinned. But in the promise to submit to power lay a sin (ἑμάρτυρία, error, sin) equal to that of the wielders of power.

In promising to submit to a force-using power, and in recognizing it as lawful, there lay a double sin. First, in trying to free themselves from the sin of fighting, those who submitted condoned that sin in those to whom they submitted. Secondly, they renounced their true freedom (i.e. obedience to the will of God) by promising always to obey the government. Such a promise to obey the power of man assumes the possibility of disobedience to God when the demands of established power conflict with the laws of God, and is a rejection of the will of God. The force-using power of the state demands from the subordinates participation in killing men – in wars, in executions, and in laws sanctioning preparations for wars and executions – and is in the direct contradiction to God’s will. Therefore, those who submit to government thereby refuse their obedience to the law of God.

One cannot yield a little on one point, and on another uphold the law of God. It is evident that if God’s law can be replaced by human law in one thing, then God’s law is no longer the highest law incumbent on men at all times. And if it is not that, it is nothing.

Deprived of the guidance given by divine law (that is, the highest capacity of human nature), people inevitably sink to that lowest grade of human existence where the only motives of their actions are their personal desires and the indoctrination to which they are subject.

All the nations that live in the unions called states lie under such a hypnotic suggestion of the necessity of obedience to government. The Russian people are in the same condition.

This is the cause of that apparently strange phenomenon in which a hundred million Russian cultivators of the soil do not choose the most natural and best way out of their present condition: by simply ceasing to submit to any force-using power. They need no kind of government, and constitute so large a majority that they may be called the whole Russian nation, but yet they continue to take part in the old government and enslave themselves more and more. Or, fighting against the old government, they prepare for themselves a new one, which, like the old one, will employ violence.

We often read and hear discussions about the reasons of the present irritated, restless condition of all the Christian nations, impregnated with all sorts of dangers, and of the terrible condition in which the demented, and in part brutalized Russian people find themselves at present. The most varied explanations are brought forward, yet all the reasons can be reduced to one. Men have forgotten God, that is to say, they have forgotten their connection to the infinite Source of Life, and consequently forgotten the purpose of a human, which consists, first of all, in fulfilling, for one's own soul's sake, the law given by this Divine Source. They have forgotten this because some of them have assumed a right to rule over people by means of threats of murder, and others have consented to obey these people and to participate in their rule. By the very act of submitting, these men have denied God and exchanged His law for human law.

Having forgotten their relation to the Infinite, most men have descended, in spite of all the subtlety of their mental achievements, to the lowest level of consciousness, where they are guided only by animal passions and by herd influence.

That is the cause of all their calamities.

Therefore, there is but one escape from the miseries with which people torment themselves. It lies in re-establishing a consciousness in themselves of their dependence on God, and thereby regaining a reasonable and free attitude toward themselves and others. Thus, this conscious obedience to God, and the consequent abandonment of the sin of power and of submission to it, now stands before all nations that suffer from the consequences of this sin.

The possibility and necessity of ceasing to submit to human power and of returning to the laws of God is dimly felt by all men, and especially vividly by the Russian people just now. And in this dim consciousness of the possibility and necessity of re-establishing their obedience to the law of God and ceasing to obey human power lies the essence of the movement now

taking place In Russia.

What is happening in Russia is not, as many people suppose, a rebellion of the people against their government in order to replace one government by another; but a much greater and more important event. What now moves the Russian people is a dim recognition of the wrongness and unreasonableness of all violence, and of the possibility and necessity of basing one's life, not on coercive power, as has been the case hitherto among all nations, but on reasonable and free agreement.

The Russian nation may accomplish the great task now before it (the task of liberating men from human power substituted for the will of God), or it may follow the path of the Western nations, lose its opportunity, and leave the leadership of the great work that lies before humanity to some other happier Eastern race. But there is no doubt that, at the present day, all nations are becoming more and more conscious of the possibility of changing this violent, insane, and wicked life for one that shall be free, rational and good. And what already exists in men's consciousness will inevitably accomplish itself in real life, for the will of God must be, and cannot fail to be, realized.

“But is collective life possible without government? Without government people would be continually robbing and killing one another,” say those who believe only in human law. People of this sort are sincerely convinced that men refrain from crime and live orderly lives only because of laws, courts of justice, police, officials, and armies, and that collective life would become impossible without governmental power. Men depraved by power fancy that since the government punishes some of the crimes committed in the state, it is this punishment that prevents men from committing other possible crimes. But the fact that government punishes some crimes does not at all prove that the existence of law-courts, police, armies, prisons and death penalties holds men back from all the crimes they might commit. That the amount of crime committed in a society does not at all depend on the punitive action of governments is quite clearly proved by the fact that, when society is in a certain mood, no increase of punitive measures by government is able to prevent the perpetration of most daring and cruel crimes, imperiling the safety of the community, as has been the case in every revolution, and as is now the case in Russia to a most striking degree.

The reason we have safety in society is that people, the majority of them (all the laboring folk), abstain from crimes and live good lives not because there are police, armies, and executions, but because there is a moral perception, common to the bulk of mankind, established by their common religious understanding and by the upbringing, traditions, and public opinion grounded on that understanding.

This moral consciousness alone, expressed in public opinion, keeps men from crimes, both in town centers and more especially in villages, where the majority of the population dwell.

I repeat that I know many examples of Russian agricultural communities emigrating to the Far East and prospering there for several decades. These communes governed themselves, being unknown to the government and outside its control, and when they were discovered by government agents, the

only result was that they experienced calamities unknown to them before, and received a new tendency towards the committing crime.

Not only does the action of governments not deter men from crimes; on the contrary, it increases crime by always disturbing and lowering the moral standard of society. Nor can this be otherwise, since always and everywhere a government by its very nature must put in the place of the highest, eternal, religious law (not written in books but in the hearts of men, and binding on everyone) its own unjust, man-made laws, the object of which is neither justice nor the common good of all, but various considerations of domestic and foreign expediency.

Such are all the existing, clearly unjust, laws of every government such as: laws maintaining the exclusive right of a minority to the land, which is the common possession of all; laws giving some men a right over the labor of others; laws compelling men to pay money for purposes of murder, or to become soldiers themselves and go to war; laws establishing monopolies in the sale of stupefying intoxicants, or forbidding the free exchange of produce across a certain line called a border; and laws regarding the execution of men for actions which are not so much immoral, as simply disadvantageous to those in power.

All these laws, and the requirements of their fulfillment by threats of violence, the public executions inflicted for the non-fulfillment of these laws, and above all the forcing of men to take part in wars, the customary exaltation of military murders, and the preparation for them – all this inevitably lowers the moral consciousness of society and therefore public opinion. Thus, governmental activity not only does not support morality, but, on the contrary, it would be hard to devise a more depraving effect than that which governments have had, and still have, on the nations.

It could never enter the head of any ordinary scoundrel to commit those horrors – the stake, the Inquisition, torture, raids, quarterings, hangings, solitary confinements, murders in war, and the plundering of nations – which have been and still are being committed, and committed ostentatiously, by all governments. All the horrors of Sténka Rázin, Pougatchéf, and other rebels

were but results and feeble imitations of the horrors perpetrated by the Johns, Peters, and Birons, which have been and are being perpetrated by all governments. If the action of government does deter some dozens of men from crime (which is very doubtful), hundreds of thousands of other crimes are committed only because men are educated in crime by governmental injustice and cruelty.

If men taking part in legislation, in commerce, in industries, living in towns, and in one way or other sharing the advantages of power can still believe in the beneficence of that power, people living on the land cannot help knowing that government only causes them all kinds of suffering and deprivation, was never needed by them, and only corrupts those of them who come under its influence.

It would seem strange to try to prove to people that they cannot live without a Government, and that the harm the thieves and robbers among them may do is greater than both the material and spiritual injury which government continually does by oppressing and corrupting them, just as it would seem strange to try to prove to slaves that it was more profitable for them to be slaves than to be free. But just as in the days of slavery, in spite of the obviously wretched condition the slaves were in, the slave-owners declared and created a belief that it was good for slaves to be slaves, and that they would be worse off if they were free (sometimes the slaves themselves became hypnotized and believed that), so now the government, and people who profit by it claim that governments, which rob and deprave men, are necessary for their well-being, and men yield to this suggestion.

People believe in it all, and must continue to do so, because, not believing in the law of God, they have to put their faith in human law. Absence of human law for them means the absence of all law, and life for men who recognize no law, is terrible. Therefore, for those who do not acknowledge the law of God, the absence of human law must seem terrible, and they do not wish to be deprived of it.

This lack of belief in the law of God is the reason of the apparently curious phenomenon of all the theoretical anarchists – clever and learned men, from

Bakoúnin and Prudhon to Reclus, Max Stirner, and Kropotkin – who indisputably correctly and justly prove the unreasonableness and harmfulness of a government, but as soon as they begin to speak of the possibility of establishing a society without that human law which they reject, they fall at once into indefiniteness, verbosity, rhetoric, and quite unfounded and fantastic hypotheses. This arises from the fact that none of these theoretic anarchists accept that law of God which is common to all people, and which it is natural for all to obey. Without the obedience of people to one and the same law – human or divine – human society cannot exist. And freedom from human law is only possible on the condition that one acknowledges a divine law, common to all people.

It will be said in reply, “But if a primitive agricultural society, like the Russian, can live without government, what are those millions to do, who have given up agriculture and are living an industrial life in towns? We cannot all cultivate the land.” “The only thing any man can be, is an agriculturist,” is the correct reply given by Henry George to this question.

“But if everybody now returned to an agricultural life,” it will again be said, “the civilization mankind has attained would be destroyed, and that would be a terrible misfortune. Therefore, a return to agriculture would be an evil and not a benefit for mankind.”

There is a certain way whereby people justify their fallacies. People, having gotten into a fallacy, accept it as an unquestionable axiom, merge this fallacy and all its effects into one notion, and then ascribe to it a special, vague and mystical meaning. Such notions are the Church, Science, Justice, the State, and Civilization. Thus, the Church becomes not what it really is, a number of men who have all fallen into the same error, but a “communion of true believers.” Legal system becomes, not a collection of unjust laws framed by certain men, but the designation of those rightful conditions under which alone it is possible for men to live. Science becomes not what it really is: the random dissertations that at a given time occupy the minds of idle people, but the only true knowledge. In the same way Civilization becomes not what it really is, the outcome of the activity (falsely and harmfully misdirected by force-using governments) of the Western nations, who have succumbed to the false idea of freeing themselves from violence by violence, but the unquestionably true way toward the future welfare of humanity.

“Even if it were true,” say the supporters of civilization, “that all these inventions, technical appliances, and products of industry are now only used by the rich and are inaccessible to working men, and cannot therefore as yet be considered a benefit to all mankind, this is so only because these mechanical appliances have not yet attained their full perfection and are not yet distributed as they should be. When automation is still further perfected,

the workmen are freed from the power of the capitalists, and all the works and factories are in their hands, the machines will produce so much of everything and it will all be so well distributed that everybody will have the use of everything. No one will lack anything, and all will be happy.”

They do not mention the fact that we have no reason to believe that the working men, who now fight so fiercely with one another for existence, or even for more of the comforts, pleasures, and luxuries of existence, will suddenly become so just and self-denying that they will be content to equally share the benefits the machines are going to give them. Leaving that aside, the very supposition that all these works with their machines, which could not have been started or continued except under the power of government and capital, will remain as they are when the power of government and capital have been destroyed is quite an arbitrary supposition.

To expect this is the same as it would have been to expect that, after the emancipation of the serfs on one of the large, luxurious Russian estates, which had a park, conservatories, arbors, a private theatrical troupe, an orchestra, a picture gallery, stables, kennels and store-houses filled with different kinds of garments, all these things would be in part distributed among the liberated peasants and in part kept for common use. One would think it was evident that, on an estate of that kind, neither the houses, clothes, nor conservatories of the rich proprietor would be suitable for the liberated peasants, and that they would not continue to keep them up. In the same way, when the working people are emancipated from the power of government and capital, they will not continue to maintain the arrangements that have arisen under these powers, and will not go to work in factories and works which could only have come into existence owing to their enslavement, even if such factories could be profitable and pleasant for them.

It is true that, when the workers are emancipated from slavery, one will regret all this cunning machinery which weaves so much beautiful stuff so quickly, and makes such nice sweets, looking-glasses, and the like. But, in the same way, after the emancipation of the serfs, one regretted the beautiful racehorses, pictures, magnolias, musical instruments and private theatres that disappeared. Just as the liberated serfs bred animals suited to their way of life

and raised the plants they required, and the racehorses and magnolias disappeared by themselves, so also the workmen, freed from the power of government and capital, will direct their labor to quite other work than at present.

“But it is much more profitable to bake all the bread in one oven than for everybody to heat his own, and to weave twenty times as quickly at a factory than on a handloom at home,” say the supporters of civilization, speaking as if men were dumb cattle for whom food, clothing, dwellings, and more or less labor were the only questions to solve.

An Australian savage knows very well that it would be more profitable to build one hut for himself and his wife, yet he erects two, so that both he and his wife may enjoy privacy. The Russian peasant knows very decidedly that it is more profitable for him to live in one house with his father and brothers, yet he separates from them, builds his own cottage, and prefers to bear privations rather than obey his elders, or quarrel and have disagreement. “Better but a pot of broth, and to be one’s own master.” I think the majority of reasonable people will prefer to clean their own clothes and boots, carry their own water, and trim their own lamps than go to a factory and do obligatory labor for one hour a day to produce machines that would do all these things.

When coercion is no longer used, nothing of all these fine machines that polish boots and clean plates, nor even of those that bore tunnels and forge steel, will probably remain. The liberated workmen will inevitably let everything that was founded on their enslavement perish, and will inevitably begin to construct quite other machines and appliances, with other aims, of other dimensions, and very differently distributed.

This is so plain and obvious that men could not help seeing it if they were not under the influence of the superstition of civilization. Because of this widespread and firmly instilled superstition, any suggestion that the path the Western nations are travelling is wrong, and any attempt to bring the erring peoples back to a free and reasonable life is being rejected, and even regarded as a kind of blasphemy or madness. This blind belief that the life we have

arranged for ourselves is the best possible life, results in the chief agents of civilization – government officials, scientists, artists, merchants, manufacturers, and authors – making the workers support their idle lives. It causes these agents to overlook their own sins and to feel perfectly sure that their activity is not an immoral and harmful activity (as it really is), but a very useful and important one, and that they are, therefore, very important people and of great use to humanity. And this belief leads them to think that all the stupid, trifling, and nasty things produced under their direction – cannons, fortresses, cinematographs, cathedrals, motors, explosive bombs, phonographs, telegraphs, and steam powered printing machines that produce mountains of paper printed with nastiness, lies and absurdities – will remain just the same when the workers are free, and will always be a great boon to humanity.

Yet to people free from the superstition of civilization, it is perfectly obvious that all those conditions of life, which among the Western nations are now called “civilization,” are nothing but monstrous results of the vanity of the upper, governing classes. Such were the productions of the Egyptian, Babylonian and Roman despots: the pyramids, temples and seraglios. And such were the productions of the Russian serf-owners, which the slaves arranged for their lords: palaces, orchestras, private theatrical troupes, artificial lakes, lace, hunting packs, and parks.

It is said that, if men cease to obey governments and return to an agricultural life, all the industrial progress they have attained will be lost, and that, therefore, to give up obeying government and to return to an agricultural life would be a bad thing. But there is no reason to suppose that a return to agricultural life, free from government, would destroy such industries and achievements as are really useful to mankind, and which do not require the enslavement of men. And if it stopped the production of that endless number of unnecessary, stupid, and harmful things on which a considerable portion of humanity is now employed, and rendered impossible the existence of the idle people who invent all the unnecessary and harmful things by which they justify their immoral lives, that does not mean that all that mankind has worked out for its welfare would be destroyed. On the contrary, the destruction of everything that is kept up by coercion would evoke and

promote an intensified production of all those useful and necessary technical improvements which, without turning men into machines and spoiling their lives, may ease the labor of the agriculturists and render their lives more pleasant.

The difference will only be that, when people are free from governments and return to agricultural labor, the objects produced by art and industry will no longer aim at amusing the rich, satisfying idle curiosity, preparing for human killing, preserving useless and harmful lives at the cost of useful ones, or producing machines by which a small number of workmen can somehow produce a great number of things or cultivate a large tract of land. Instead, they will aim at increasing the productivity of those laborers who cultivate their own allotments with their own hands, and help to better their lives without taking them away from the land or interfering with their freedom.

But how will people live without obeying human authorities? How will they conduct their common business? What will become of the different states? What will happen to Ireland, Poland, Finland, Algeria, India, and all the Colonies? How will the nations group themselves?

Such questions are put by people who are accustomed to think that the conditions of life of all human societies are decided by the will and direction of a few individuals, and who therefore imagine that the knowledge of how future life will shape itself is accessible to man. Such knowledge, however, never was, nor can be, accessible.

If the most learned and best educated Roman citizen, accustomed to think that the life of the world was guided by the decrees of the Roman Senate and Emperors, had been asked what would become of the Roman Empire in a few centuries, you may be sure that he could never have predicted the barbarians, or feudalism, or the papacy, or the disintegration of the peoples and their reunion into large states. The same is true of those Utopias of the twenty-first century, with flying machines, X-rays, electric motors, and socialist organizations of life, which are so daringly drawn by the Bellamys, Morris, Anatole France, and others.

People cannot know what form social life will take in the future; in fact, their thinking they can know it is harmful in itself. Nothing so interferes with the straight current of their lives as this fancied knowledge of what the future life of humanity ought to be. The life of individuals as well as of communities consists only in this: that men and communities continually move towards the unknown, changing not because certain men have formed brain-spun plans as to what these changes should be, but in consequence of a tendency inherent in all people to strive towards moral perfection, attainable by the infinitely varied activity of millions and millions of human lives. Therefore, the relation in which people will stand towards one another and the forms into which they shape society depend entirely on the inner characters of people, and not at all on forecasting this or that form of life which they desire to

adopt. Yet those who do not believe in God's law always imagine that they can know what the future state of society should be, and not only define this future state, but do all sorts of things, which they themselves admit to be evil, in order to mold human society to the shape they think it ought to take.

The fact that others do not agree with them, and think that the life of society should be totally different, does not disturb them. Having assured themselves that they can know what the future of society ought to be, they not only decide this theoretically, but also act. They fight, seize property, imprison and kill men to establish the social order in which, according to their ideas, mankind will be happy.

The old argument of Caiaphas, "It is expedient that one man should die, and that the whole nation perish not," seems irrefutable to such people. Of course they must kill, not only one man, but hundreds and thousands of men, if they are fully assured that the death of these thousands will give welfare to millions. People who do not believe in God and His law cannot think otherwise. Such people live in obedience only to their passions, to their reasoning, and to social influence, and have never considered their purpose of life, nor what the true wellbeing of a human constitutes. Or, if they have thought about it, they have decided that this cannot be known. These people, who do not know wherein the wellbeing of a single man lies, imagine that they know, and know beyond all doubt, what is needed for the wellbeing of society as a whole. They fancy that they know it so certainly, that, to attain such wellbeing (as they understand it), they commit deeds of violence, murders, and executions, which they themselves admit to be evil.

At first it seems strange that people, who do not know what they themselves need, can imagine that they know clearly and indubitably what the whole community needs. And yet, it is precisely because they do not know what they need that they fancy they know what the whole community needs.

The dissatisfaction they (lacking all guidance for their lives) dimly feel, they attribute not to themselves, but to the wrongness of the existing social order, which differ from the one they have invented. And in cares for the rearrangement of society they find a possibility of escaping from

consciousness of the wrongness of their own lives. That is why those who do not know what to do with themselves are always particularly sure what ought be done with society as a whole. The less they know about themselves, the more sure they are about society. Such men, for the most part, are either very thoughtless youths, or are the most depraved of social leaders, such as the Marats, Napoleons, and Bismarcks. And that is why the history of the nations is full of the most terrible evil-doings.

The worst effect of this imaginary foreknowledge of what society should be, and of this activity directed to the alteration of society, is that it is just this supposed knowledge and this activity which more than anything else hinders the movement of the community along the path natural to it for its true welfare.

Therefore, to the question, “What will the lives of the nations be like, which cease to obey power?” we reply that we not only do not know, but ought not to suppose that anyone can know.

We do not know in what circumstances these nations will be placed when they cease to obey power. But we know indubitably what each one of us must do, in order for those conditions of national life should be the very best. We know, without the least doubt, that in order to make those conditions the very best, we must first of all abstain from those acts of violence which the existing power demands of us, as well as from those to which men fighting against the existing power to establish a new one invite us, and we must therefore not obey any power. We must refuse to submit, not because we know how our life will shape itself in consequence of our ceasing to obey power, but because submission to a power, that requires that we violate the law of God, is a sin. This we know beyond doubt, and we also know that, as a consequence of not transgressing God’s will and not sinning, nothing but good can come to us or to the whole world.

People are prone to believe in the realization of the most improbable events under the sun. They believe in the possibility of flying to and communicating with the planets, in the possibility of arranging socialistic communes, in spiritualistic communications, and in many other palpably impossible things. But they do not wish to believe that the perception of life, in which they and all who surround them live, can ever be altered.

And yet such changes, even the most extraordinary, are continually taking place in ourselves, among those around us, and among whole communities and nations. It is these changes that constitute the essence of human life.

Not to mention changes that have happened in historic times in the social consciousness of nations. At present in Russia, before our very eyes, an apparently astonishing change is taking place with incredible rapidity in the consciousness of the whole Russian nation, of which we had no external indication two or three years ago. The change only seems to us to have taken place suddenly, because the preparation for it, which went on in the spiritual region, was not visible. A similar change is still going on in the spiritual domain unreachable to our observations. The Russian people, who two years ago thought it impossible to disobey or even to criticize the existing power, now not only criticize, but are even preparing to disobey it and to replace it by a new one. Why should we not suppose that in the consciousness of the Russian people's is now growing another, intrinsic to them, change of their attitude toward government, a change consisting in their moral and religious emancipation from authority?

Why may not such a change be possible among any people, and why not at present among the Russians? Why, instead of that irritated, egotistical mood of mutual strife, fear, and hatred, which has now seized all nations; why, instead of all this preaching of lies, immorality, and violence now so strenuously disseminated among all nations by newspapers, books, speeches, and actions; after all the sins, sufferings, and terrors they have lived through, why should not a religious, humane, reasonable, loving mood seize the minds

of all nations, and of the Russian nation in particular – a state of mind which would make them see all the horror of submitting to the authority under which they live, and feel the joyful possibility of a reasonable, loving life without violence and without government?

Why should not the consciousness of the possibility and necessity of emancipating themselves from the sin of power, and of establishing unity among men based on mutual agreement and on respect and love between men, be evolving now, just as the movement is now manifesting itself in a revolution prepared by decades of influence tending in one particular direction?

Some fifteen or twenty-five years ago the gifted French writer, Dumas, wrote a letter to Zola in which he, a talented and intelligent man chiefly occupied with aesthetic and social questions, when already old, uttered some strikingly prophetic words. Truly the spirit of God “blows wherever it pleases”!

This is what he wrote: The soul, too, is incessantly at work, ever evolving toward light and truth. And so long as it has not reached full light and conquered the whole truth, it will continue to torment man.

Well! The soul never so occupied man, never so pressured him, as is does today. It is as though it were in the air we all breathe. The few isolated souls that had separately desired the regeneration of society have, little by little, sought one another out, beckoned one another, drawn nearer, united, comprehended one another, and formed a group, a centre of attraction, toward which others now fly from the four quarters of the globe, like larks toward a mirror. They have, as it were, formed one collective soul, so that men in future may realize together, consciously and irresistibly, the approaching union and steady progress of nations that were but recently hostile one to another. This new soul I find and recognize in events seemingly most calculated to deny it.

These armaments of all nations, these threats their representatives address to one another, this revival of race persecutions, and these hostilities among compatriots are all things of evil nature, but not of evil omen. They are the

last convulsions of that which is about to disappear. The social body is like the human body. Disease, in this case, is but a violent effort of the organism to throw off a morbid and harmful element.

Those who have profited, and expect for long or forever to continue to profit by the mistakes of the past, are uniting to prevent any modification of existing conditions. Hence these armaments and threats and persecutions. But look carefully and you will see that all this is quite superficial. It is colossal, but hollow.

There is no longer any soul in it; the soul has gone elsewhere. These millions of armed men, who are daily drilled to prepare for a general war of extermination, no longer hate the men they are expected to fight, and none of their commanders dares to proclaim this war. As for the appeals and even the threatening claims that rise from the suffering and the oppressed – a great and sincere pity, recognizing their justice, begins at last to respond from above.

Agreement is inevitable. It will come at an appointed time, and is nearer than is expected. I know not if this is because I shall soon leave this world, and because the rays that are already reaching me from below the horizon have disturbed my sight, but I believe our world is about to begin to realize the words, “Love one another,” without, however, being concerned whether a man or a God uttered them.

The spiritual movement one recognizes on all sides, and which so many naive and ambitious men expect to be able to direct, will be absolutely humanitarian.

Mankind, which does nothing moderately, is about to be seized with a frenzy, a madness, of love. This will not, of course, happen smoothly or all at once. It will involve misunderstandings – even sanguinary ones perchance – so trained and so accustomed have we been to hatred, even by those, sometimes, whose mission it was to teach us to love one another. But it is evident that this great law of brotherhood must be accomplished someday, and I am convinced that the time is commencing when our desire for its accomplishment will become irresistible.

I believe that this thought, however strange the expression “seized with a frenzy of love” may seem, is perfectly true, and is felt more or less dimly by all people of our day. A time must come when love, which forms the fundamental essence of the soul, will take the place natural to it in the life of mankind, and will become the chief basis of the relations between men.

That time is coming; it is at hand. Lamennais wrote: We are living in the times predicted by Christ. From one end of the earth to the other, everything is tottering. In all institutions, whatever they may be, in all the different systems on which the social life of men is founded, nothing stands firm. Everyone feels that soon it must all fall to ruins, and that in this temple too, not one stone will be left on another. But as the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple, from whence the living God had departed, foreboded and prepared the erection of a new city and a new temple, whither the people of all races and of all nations would come together at their own free will; so on the ruins of the temples and towns of today, a new city and a new temple will be erected, predestined to become the universal temple and the common fatherland of the human race, disunited until now by teachings that are hostile to one another, that make brothers into strangers, and that sow godless hatred and revolting warfare among them. When that hour, known to God alone, arrives – the hour of union of the nations into one temple and one city – then indeed will the Kingdom of Christ come the complete fulfillment of his divine mission. Did he not come with the one object of teaching men that they must be united by the law of love?

Channing said the same: Mighty powers are at work in the world. Who can stay them? God’s word has gone forth, and “it cannot return to him void.” A new comprehension of the Christian spirit, a new reverence for humanity, a new feeling of brotherhood and of all men’s relation to the common Father – these are among the signs of our times. We see it; do we not feel it? Before this, all oppressions are to fall.

Society, silently pervaded by this, is to change its aspect of universal warfare for peace. The power of selfishness, all-grasping and seemingly invincible, is to yield to this diviner energy... ‘Peace on earth’ will not always sound as fiction.

Why assume that people, who are entirely in the power of God, will always remain under the strange delusion that only human laws – changeable, accidental, unjust, and local as they are – are important and mandatory, and not the one, eternal, just law of God, common to all men? Why should we think that the teachers of mankind will always preach, as they now do, that there is and can be no such law, but that the only laws that exist are special laws of religious ritual for every nation and every sect; or the so-called scientific laws of matter and the imaginary laws of sociology (which do not bind men to anything); or, finally, civil laws, which men themselves can institute and change? Such an error is possible for a time, but why should we suppose that people, to whom one and the same divine law written in their hearts has been revealed in the teaching of the Brahmins, Buddha, Lao-Tsze, Confucius, and Christ, will not at last follow this one basis of all laws, providing as it does moral satisfaction and a joyful social life? Why would they always follow that wicked and pitiful tangle of church, scientific, and governmental teachings which diverts their attention from the one thing needful, and directs it towards what can be of no use to them, since it does not show them how each separate man should live? Why should we think that men will continue to unceasingly and deliberately torment themselves, some trying to rule over others, and others submitting to the rulers with hatred and envy and seeking means themselves to become rulers? Why should we think that the progress that men pride themselves on will always lie in the increase of population and the preservation of life, and not in the moral perfection of each own life; or will lie in miserable mechanical inventions, by which men will produce ever more useless, harmful and perverting objects; and will not lie in greater and greater unity one with another, and in that subjugation of their lusts which is necessary to make such unity possible? Why should we not suppose that men will rejoice and compete with one another not in riches and luxuries, but in simplicity, prudence, and kindness one to another? Why should we not suppose that men will see progress, not in seizing more and more for themselves, but in taking less and less from others, and in giving more and more to others; not in increasing one's own power, not in fighting

more and more effectively, but in growing more and more humble, and in coming into closer and closer union, man with man and nation with nation?

Instead of imagining men unrestrainedly yielding to their lusts, breeding like rabbits, establishing factories in towns for the production of chemical foods to feed their increasing generation, and living in these towns without plants or animals; why should we not imagine chaste people, battling against their lusts, living in loving communion with their neighbors amid fruitful fields, gardens, and woods, with tame, well-fed animal friends? Why should we not imagine only this difference from their present condition: that they do not consider the land to be anyone's private property, do not themselves belong to any particular nation, do not pay taxes or duties, prepare for war, or fight anyone, but on the contrary, have more and more peaceful interaction with every race? To imagine the life of men like that, nothing need be invented, altered, or added in one's imagination to the lives of the agricultural races we know in China, Russia, India, Canada, Algeria, Egypt and Australia.

To picture such life to ourselves, one need not imagine any kind of ingenious or out-of-the-way arrangement, but need only imagine to oneself people acknowledging no other supreme law except the universal law expressed alike in the Brahmin, Buddhist, Confucian, Taoist, and Christian religions: the law of love to God and to one's neighbor.

For human life to be different, we need not imagine people as some new kind of beings or virtuous angels. They will be just as they now are, with all weaknesses and passions natural to them. They will sin, perhaps quarrel and commit adultery, take away other people's property, and even slay; but all this will be the exception and not, as now, the rule. Their life will be quite different owing to the one fact that they will not consider organized violence a good thing and a necessary condition of life, and will not be trained otherwise by hearing the evil deeds of governments represented as good actions.

Their life will be totally different, because there will no longer be that impediment to preaching and teaching the spirit of goodness, love, and obedience to the will of God, which exists when we accept governmental

violence as necessary and lawful, demanding what is contrary to God's law, and involving the recognition of what is criminal and wrong as lawful and good.

Why not imagine that, through their suffering, people will wake up from that suggestion of the hypnosis, under which they have suffered so long, and remember that they are all sons and servants of God, and therefore can and must obey only Him and their own consciences? All this is not difficult to imagine; it is even difficult to imagine that it should not be accomplished.

“Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven,” does not refer to individuals only, but also to human societies. A man, having experienced all the miseries caused by the passions and temptations of life, must consciously return to a state of simplicity, kindness towards all, and readiness to accept what is good (the state in which children unconsciously live), and return to it with the wealth of experience and the reason of a grown-up man. So also human society, having experienced all the miserable consequences of abandoning the law of God to obey human power, and of attempting to arrange life apart from agricultural labor, must now consciously return, with all the wealth of experience gained during the time of its aberration, from the snares of human power, and from the attempt to organize life on a basis of industrial activity, and must submit to the highest, Divine law, and to the primary work of cultivating the soil, which it had temporarily abandoned.

To consciously return from the temptation of human power, and to obey the supreme law of God alone, is to admit that it is always and everywhere binding upon us. This eternal law of God is alike in all uncorrupted Brahman, Buddhist, Confucian, Taoian, Christian, and Muslim teachings, and is incompatible with subjection to human power.

To consciously live an agricultural life is to acknowledge it to be not an accidental and temporary condition, but the life which makes it easiest for man to fulfill the will of God, and which should therefore be preferred to any other. The Eastern nations (and among them the Russian nation) are most favorably situated for such a return to agricultural life and to conscious disobedience to power.

The Western nations have already wandered so far on the false path of changing the organization of power, and exchanging agricultural for industrial work, that such a return is difficult and requires great efforts. But, sooner or later, the ever-increasing annoyance and instability of their position will force them to return to a reasonable and truly free life, supported by their

own labor and not by the exploitation of other nations. However alluring the external success of manufacturing industry and the showy side of such a life may be, the most penetrating thinkers among the Western nations have long pointed out how disastrous the path is that they are following, how necessary it is to reconsider and change their way, and imperative it is to return to that agricultural life which was the original form of life for all nations, and which is the ordained path making it possible for all men to live a reasonable and joyful life.

Most of the Eastern peoples, including the Russian nation, will not have to alter their lives at all. They need only stop their advance along the false path they have just entered, become clearly conscious of the negative attitude towards power, and embrace the affectionate attitude towards husbandry that was always natural to them. We of the Eastern nations should be thankful to fate for placing us in a position in which we can benefit by the example of the Western nations. We benefit by it, not in the sense of imitating it, but in the sense of avoiding the mistakes of the Western nations, not doing what they have done, not travelling the disastrous path from which nations that have gone so far are already returning, or are preparing to return.

It is in this halt in the march along a false path, and in showing the possibility and necessity of indicating and making a different path – one easier, more joyful, and more natural than the one the Western nations have travelled – that the chief and mighty meaning of the revolution now taking place in Russia lies.